THE Accepted TIME, AND DAY of Salvation, &c.

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SINNERS Flee from the Wrath to come.

2 Cor. 6. part of Verse 2.

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By *Robert Russel.* K.

Glasgow, Printed by *Robert Sanders*, One of His *Majesties* Printers. 1700.

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BRITISH MUSEUM

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2 Cor 6. part of Ver. 2.

——Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the Day of Salvation.

THE Occasion of these Words may be taken from the Words immediately before the Text, which were the Lord's own Words spoken by the Mouth of the Prophet *Isaiah*, 49. 8. Saying, *I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in a Day of Salvation have I helped thee.* Or, as it is in the words before the Text, *In a Day of Sal-*

vation have I succoured thee. And from thence the Apostle takes occasion to shew them when that *Accepted Time* and *Day of Salvation is*, wherein God hears us, and accepts us; and that he doth here, in the words of my Text: *Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the Day of Salvation.*

From these words I shall gather this general Observation:

That the only Time to make our Peace with God. and thereby to obtain Mercy and Salvation, is now, this present Season of Grace; or the time present is the only Acceptable Time: For, *Behold, now is the accepted Time; Behold, now is the Day of Salvation.*

The Text affords us these two General Parts:

First, Here is a double Note of Attention; *Behold! Behold!*

Secondly, Here is the Subject-matter to *Behold*; that is, *Now is the accepted Time*; and, *now is the Day of Salvation.*

First, Here is a double Note of Attention; *Behold! Behold!* Now to behold a thing, is to take great notice of it, to observe it, and to mind it; and we may be sure, that whensoever we are called upon to behold a thing, it must be something of very great Concern; there are many things that are not worth beholding:

beholding: For if you mind it, you may find in the Scriptures, that when any thing is mentioned that is of greater Concernment than others, it is alwayes brought in with this Note, *Behold*: As Lam. 3. 12. *Behold, and see, if there be any Sorrow like unto my Sorrow.* A Matter of very great Concernment. So John 1. 29. *Behold the Lamb of GOD, that taketh away the sins of the World*: And many others. Now there cannot be a Matter of greater Concernment, than this in my Text, That *now is the accepted Time*, and *now is the Day of Salvation.* A thing which concerns our winning, or losing of Heaven for ever; a thing which concerns our everlasting Peace, or our everlasting Woe; that now is the Time, that if we in earnest seek for Mercy, we may have it: *Now is the Time*, that if we seek and desire Grace, Pardon, and Salvation, we shall be accepted; but afterwards, all our praying crying, and intreating, will be in vain: Now what can be more worth our beholding than this? This is a Matter which concerns our selves, and it is of the greatest Concernment in the World, therefore this requires a double Note of Attention, to put us in mind of it; *Behold! behold!*

And so I pass, *Secondly*, from the Note *Behold*, to the second General Head, the Subject-Matter to be behold; and that also is

double: *Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.* Now tho the *Accepted Time*, and the *Day of Salvation*, are two several Words, yet in Sence they are one and the same: For the *Accepted Time*, is our *Day of Salvation*, and our *Day of Salvation* is the *Accepted Time*; wherein, if we unfeignedly seek the LORD, and turn to him, by true Repentance, we shall be sure to be accepted, pardoned, and saved: For, *Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.*

Now in my further Prosecution of this Subject, I shall proceed after this manner:

First, I shall shew you, That with us, there is such a Time, as an *Accepted Time*, and *Day of Salvation.*

Secondly, I shall shew you the Season, when this *Accepted Time*, and *Day of Salvation* is.

Thirdly, The Reason of it. And,

Lastly, The Application.

I shall begin with the *First*, and shew you, That with us, there is such a Time, and *Day of Salvation*: And that, First, in respect of the fallen Angels, who never had such a Season allotted them. Alas! they committed but one sin against God, and that but only in Thought, and yet for that one sin, they were thrust out of Heaven, and reserved under Chains of Darkness, unto the dreadful

Judgement of the Great Day; they being once fallen, had never a *Day of Salvation* afforded them; they never had one Moment of Time allotted them, upon the improvement of which, they might have been reserved to Mercy; therefore if they should pray, and cry, and intreat the Lord never so earnestly, that he would forgive them that one sin, and restore them once more to Mercy; yet they shall never be regarded: Christ suffered not for them, there was not one Drop of Blood shed to wash away their sin: *For he took not upon him the nature of Angels, but the seed of Abraham*, Heb. 2. 16.

Secondly, There is with us such a Time as an *Accepted Time*, and *Day of Salvation*, in opposition to those damned Souls that are already in Hell: 'Tis true, the Devils being once fallen, never had Mercy offered them, they never had one Minute of Time afforded them to work out their *Salvation*, whereas these damned VVretches once had Mercy offered them, but they despised it; they once had a *Day of Salvation*, a Time wherein they might have been *accepted*: Alas! They had many a Call from God, Time after Time, many a secret motion from his *Spirit*; They once heard many a Sermon, and enjoyed many a Sabbath, many an Ordinance; GOD waited upon them Time after Time, Year

after Year, whilst they continued in their Rebellion against him: But alas! alas! they sinned away all these precious Opportunities; all this Time they might have been *accepted*, if they had turned to God in earnest: But lo! Now the Day of Grace is concluded, the Door of Hope is for ever shut against them; now they are left in a far more miserable Condition than the fallen Angels are in; for they once had a Golden Season of Grace put into their Hands, but they wilfully lost it, and trifled it away; long did God wait, and call upon them, from one Time to another, by his Spirit, and by his Messengers; but they wearied out his Patience, grieved his Spirit, despised his Messengers, abused all his Goodness: *Alas!* the Devils will never have such Considerations as these to torment them, as these damned Souls now have.

Thirdly, There is with us such a Time as an *Accepted Time*, and *Day of Salvation*, in Opposition to what shall be with us hereafter, if we let it slip; when we come to Hell, we shall be in the same miserable Condition that those damned Souls are in, that are already there: Consider, that Man being created in a holy and righteous Estate, and we being fallen, if God had not found out a Way for our Recovery, we had been left in

as miſerable a Condition as the fallen Angels were; but God of his unſpeakable Mercy, looked in tender Love upon loſt Mankind, that he gave his dearly beloved Son, to ſuffer and die for us; and for his ſake he hath afforded every one of us a Day of Grace, which if we duly improve in turning to God, in receiving of this his *Son*, as he is offered, we ſhall be accepted, pardoned and ſaved; but if we ſquander away this precious Seaſon, in following Vanity and Foolery, in ſatisfying our Luſts, and pleaſing our ſelves, untill the Door of Mercy be ſhut; our Damnation will be far more greater, than if we never had had ſuch an Opportunity put into our Hands: That's the Firſt; there is with us ſuch a Time as an *Accepted Time*, and *Day of Salvation.*

Secondly, I ſhall next ſhew, when this *Accepted Time*, and *Day of Salvation* is; that is, it is now; *Now is the accepted time*, and *now is the day of ſalvation.* The Apoſtle doth not ſpeak it in the future Tenſe, that ſoon after will be an *Accepted Time*, though you continue in your ſins for a while in rebelling againſt God, grieving of his Spirit, and provoking him to VVrath; yet if you turn to God hereafter, you ſhall be accepted; no, but he ſpeaks in the Preſent Tenſe, *Behold, now is the accepted time*; now is the Oppor-

tunity of Grace put into your Hands, wherein Heaven is to be won or loſt for ever; and according as you improve this preſent Seaſon of Grace, ſo muſt your Everlaſting Eſtate be in another VVorld: All Mankind are in a miſerable Eſtate by Nature; and it is now that the Terms of Mercy are offered you, and an Opportunity of Grace put into your hands: O! for the Lords ſake do not ruin your Souls for ever, by neglecting ſo precious an Opportunity: Mark what our Saviour ſaith, *Mat.* 5. 25. 'Agree now with thy Adver-'ſary quickly, whilſt thou art in the way with 'him, leſt at any time the Adverſary deliver 'thee to the Judge, and the Judge deliver 'thee to the Officer, and thou be caſt into 'Priſon: Verily I ſay unto thee, thou ſhal not 'come out thence till thou haſt paid the utmoſt Farthing. Now God is your Adverſary, for we are all by Nature Enemies to God, by reaſon of ſin; but, yet God of his tender Love hath given us Terms of Reconciliation; agree therefore with him quickly, before his Juſtice hath ſeized upon thee, & thou be delivered to the Officer, the Devil, and then thou ſhalt by him be caſt into the Priſon of Hell, and there thou muſt ly in extream and intolerable Torments, untill thou haſt paid the utmoſt Farthing of Gods Juſtice, which can never be to all Eternity: O!

there

therefore agree and make your Peace with your God quickly, whilst thou art in the way with him; for now you are in a fair way with him to be reconciled for he offers you Terms of Mercy; he hath shewed you in his VVord by what Means you may come to make an Agreement with him; he calls upon you by his Messengers; he entreats you in Christs stead, to be reconciled to him, 2 *Cor.* 20. And if God so earnestly desire our Reconciliation with him, in what a fair way are we then with God to be reconciled? But continue in your unconverted Estate, and in your Enmity against God a little longer, until the season of Grace be at an end, and God hath shut against you the Door of Mercy, then God and you will be unreconciliable for ever; then all your Prayers, and Tears, and Endeavours shall never be accepted; then nothing remains, but to the Prison of Hell you must be cast; there to remain for ever and ever: Therefore as *Eliphaz* said to *Job*, so say I to you, *Job* 22. 21. *Acquaint now thy self with him and be at peace, thereby good shall come unto thee*; For, behold, now is the time that thou mayest be accepted; but more particular, to shew you when this *Accepted Time*, and *Day of Salvation* is; it is now in this Life, for there is no making our Peace with God after Death; therefore, saith *Solomon*,

Eccles. 9. 10. 'Whatsoever thy hand findeth 'to do, do it with all thy might; for there 'is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor 'wisdom in the Grave, whither thou goest.

Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, whether it be to repent, to close savingly with Christ, to get Grace, or to strengthen thy Graces, or to secure thy Title toward Heaven: O! set about it with all thy might and main, for there is none of this to be done in the Grave, whether we are all hastening; then Praying Opportunities, Sermon Opportunities, Sacrament Opportunities, Sabbath Opportunities, will all be at an end: Now, if yet, you are in your unconverted Estate, and yet, under the wrath of God, now through Gods Grace you may be converted; if yet, you are Enemies to God, you may be reconciled; if yet, you are in your sins, you may be pardoned; if yet, you are in the Estate of Damnation, you may be brought into an Estate of Salvation: But when once Death hath shut your Eyes, then your condition will be unalterable for ever: *I must work the work of him that sent me, whilst it is to day;] for the night cometh, when no Man can work.*

But yet, though the Time of this Life be the *Accepted Time*, and *Day of Salvation*, yet every time of a Mans Life may not be an accepted Time with him; for with some Men, the

the Day of Salvation lasteth all their Life long, and with some it doth not: Therefore well may the Prophet cry out, *Isa.* 55. 6. *Seek ye the Lord whilst he may be found; call upon him whilst he is near*; for there may come a time even in the time of this Life, that the Lord will not be found, though he be sought never so diligently: As *Esau*, because he neglected the Season of his Repentance, he afterwards sought Repentance carefully with Tears, even long before the Day of his Death, but he could not find it, *Heb.* 12. 17.

'Tis true, as long as there is Life, there is Hope; there is Hope so long as a Man is on this side Hell; and the time of life is commonly called the Day of Grace; not because the Day of Grace continues all a mans Life long, but because it is bounded within the Compass of a mans Life: Now, because every time of a mans life may not be an *accepted time*; I shall therefore shew you some certain Seasons of a mans Life, which if he have but wisdom to know them, and grace to improve them, he shall be sure to be accepted: I shall but little more than name them.

First, The time of Youth is the accepted time; *Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy Youth*, says *Solomon*, Eccles. 12. 1. O Friends! if you turn to God, and in time close with Christ, and seek for Pardon, and Mercy, now whilst

whilst you are Young, you shall surely be accepted: For saith God to his People *Israel*, Jer. 2, 2. *I have expected the kindness of thy Youth*. Some young People I have sometimes looked upon, as the happiest People in the World, because we may be sure their season of Grace is not gone; the present time is the Day of Salvation; the Lord give them Grace to improve it: To see young Boys and Girls give themselves to studying the Scripture, to Praying, and crying after Christ, Grace, and Mercy: Oh! it is the rarest sight in the world, whoever the door of Mercy is shut against, it shal certainly be open to them.

Secondly, The Time of Health & Strength is the *accepted time*: In the old Law, that which was offered up in Sacrifice, which was torn, blind, or lame, was not accepted: This shews, that those who spend the best of their days, and strength, in the work of the Devil, & then thinks to give up themselves to God, when Sickness, lameness, and feeble old Age comes, must never look to be accepted, God will not be turned off w the Devils leavings.

Thirdly, The Time of the Gospel is the *accepted time*, Praying Opportunities, Sermon Opportunities, Sacrament Opportunities, Sabbath Opportunities; these are seasons of Salvation, for we know not how soon God may remove our Candlestick out of his place,

and

and take from us the Means of *Grace*; and then the Opportunities of *Grace* will be also at an end.

Fourthly, and *Laſtly*, The Time of *Gods* Spirits working, and ſtriving in the hearts of wicked Men, is the *accepted time*; and they that obey the Calls of *Gods* Spirit, when it ſtrives, ſhall be ſure to be accepted, let it be at what time ſoever, whether it be in Youth, or old Age; though the Spirit hath its *Goings* and *Comings*, yet ſome it doth not give over to their old Age, or to their Dying day; and ſome it doth: *Gods* Spirit is compared to *Noahs* Dove, which *Noah* ſent out of the Ark, and it returned to him again; and then again: But when he ſent the Dove out the third time, the Dove never returned to him more; ſo the Spirit of *God* hath its *Goings* and *Comings*; it comes at one time into the heart of a ſinner, and ſecretly calls upon him to repent, and become a new Creature: But this ſinner, it may be, ſtifles theſe good motions, quenches the *Spirit*, and continues ſtill in his ſinfull courſe of Life; then it may be, the *Spirit* departs, and after a while comes again; and finding the ſinner the ſame ſtill, he departs, and then comes again, and again; and at laſt the *Spirit* being often reſiſted and grieved, he is provoked finally to depart, and never to trouble him more; and

then

then Grace is departed, and he is immediately delivered up to a hard Heart, and a reprobate Mind, that ſhall never repent: And when once he is brought to that paſs, then all the *Sermons*, and all the Prayers in the World, will never do him any good. O! therefore have a care of quenching and grieving the Holy *Spirit* of God, when it ſecretly ſtirs, and works in your Hearts; but be carefull to obey its motions, leſt the *Spirit* being grieved, withdraw it ſelf finally, and never return more; and then your *accepted time*, and *day of ſalvation* will be at an end. Now conſider all this, if you are yet in your Youth, and ſtrength, and enjoy the Ordinances of God, and the Means of Grace, and the ſecret Operations of Gods *Spirit*; and then behold, and again, *Behold, that now is the accepted time*, and *now is the day of ſalvation.* Now with us, there is ſuch a time as an *accepted time*, and *day of ſalvation*; and that for theſe two Reaſons: I will but juſt name them.

Firſt, That thereby the *Saints* might have occaſion for ever to magnifie the free Grace of God, that he hath not left them to periſh in their miſerable *Eſtate*, but hath offered them Terms of Mercy, and hath put an Opportunity of *Salvation* into their Hands, and hath given them Grace to improve it.

Secondly,

Secondly, That thereby the wicked may be left without Excuſe; for there is never a damned Soul in Hell, that can plead this, that they never had a Day of Grace: O it would be a great leſſening of their Torments, if they could plead ſo. Alas! there was never a man, nor woman, ſince the creation of the world, but hath had a Seaſon of Grace; there was never none yet ever lived, be their lives ſhort or long, but before they die, they have Mercy offered them, and an acceptable Time to ſeek it in; therefore the Wicked ſhall be left without Excuſe; nay, 'twill add much to their Torments, to conſider, that they once had a Seaſon of Grace and *Salvation*, and yet wilfully loſt it. O let every one therefore, both ſmall and great, behold, and conſider, That *now is the Accepted Time*, and *now is the Day of Salvation*.

THE APPLICATION.

THE firſt Uſe that I ſhall make of this, ſhall be a Uſe of Terror, to all ſuch as ſquander and trifle away this Precious Seaſon of Grace, and Salvation: *Friends*, you have heard that God's Spirit will not always ſtrive with Man; God is not bound to wait all a Mans Life long; if God continue waiting from one time to another, from one Year to another,

ther, from one Sabbath to another, and yet you turn a deaf Ear to his Calls, and slight all his Warnings, and will go on resolutely, and presumptuously in your sins; consider, God will at last be weary of waiting, his Patience will be at last tired out; and then, just as you have served God in your Day of Grace, so God will serve you, when his Day of Wrath and Vengeance comes: O read, and tremble, in that dreadful place of Scripture, *Prov.* 1. 2. to the end: Mark there how lovingly GOD expostulates with wicked Men, saying, *How long ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and ye scorners delight in scorning? and ye fools hate knowledge?* And then see his loving Call and Invitation, *ver.* 23. *Turn you at my reproof:* And also his gracious Promise, *Behold, I will pour out my Spirit into you; I will make known my words unto you:* But yet all this loving Expostulation, Invitation, and Promise, would prevail nothing with them, they would run on in their evil courses for all that; therefore see what GOD saith to them now, *ver.* 24. *Because I have called, and ye refused, I have stretched out my hand, and no Man regarded; but ye have set at naught my counsels, and would none of my reproofs: I also will laugh at your calamity, and will mock when your fear cometh, when fear cometh as a whirlwind, when destruction and anguish cometh upon them, then shal they*

call

call upon me, but I will not answer, then shal they seek me early, but they shall not find me, in that they hated knowledge, and did not chuse the fear of the Lord. A most dreadful Text this is, if it be rightly considered; in the Day of their Visitation, GOD called upon them to turn from their evil ways, and they turned a deaf ear, and would not regard; but afterwards, when their Day of *Israel* was past, and the Day of their Extremity was come, then they called upon God for Mercy, and God would not regard them; it is a common Proverb amongst us, *He that will not whilst he may, when he would he shall have nay*; This was the very Case of *Esau*, he was a Hunting, and following his fleshly Delights, when God was a calling him to Repentance; and then afterwards, when he would have repented, he was rejected; for he found no place for Repentance, though he sought it carefully with Tears, *Heb.* 12. 27. Now God may call long upon wicked Men to turn, and be saved, both by his Word, and by his Spirit, but they will not regard; but when this their Day of Salvation is ended, and they come to lye upon their Death-beds, O! how they will then cry out, *Lord pardon me, Lord save me*; *Mercy Lord, Mercy Lord, some Mercy for Christ's sake*: But God may justly answer them, *No Sinner, no Mercy to be had*; *I once offered thee Mercy, but thou abusest it*: *and seeing*

the thou wouldst not accept of Mercy whilst it was offered thee, therefore now the Door of Mercy is shut against thee for ever.

Secondly, My second Use, shall be for Matter of Encouragement, to such who are willing to come in, and accept of the Terms of Mercy, but yet keep off, thro' many Doubts and Fears.

O says one, I *am afraid my Day of Salvation is past already; and if so, all my endeavours will be in vain, do what I can, I shal never be accepted.*

Answ. To answer this, I will give you this one Mark, whereby you may know whether your Day of Salvation be past or no: You say, you are afraid that your Day of Salvation is past: If so, that is a good *Sign*, that it is not past; for those with whom their Day of Grace is past, they grow senseless of any such Matter. Again: Do not you find sometimes godly Motions stirring in you by the *Spirit*? Do not you find in you sometimes a sorrow for sin, after it is committed; and a desire to leave sin? Doth not your Heart sometimes melt, when you hear y Word preached? Have you not some Desire to become a New Creature? if so, then your day of Salvation is not yet past; for those with whom the Day of Grace is past, they are given over to a senseless, hard, and obdurate Heart, that is neither moved with Mercies nor terrified with Judgements;

Judgements; and being given over to themſelves, they runſinto all kind of wickedneſs, & greedineſs; and as it ſeems, this is not thy Caſe, as yet; ſo now, up, and cloſe with the Terms of Mercy, whilſt thy Day of Salvation is lengthned out.

O, but ſaith another, *it may be I am none of God's Elect; and if ſo, then all my Endeavours will be to no purpoſe.*

Anſw. Whether a Man be Elected or not, that is not in his Power to know, and therefore he ought not to meddle with it; but you muſt underſtand, that God decrees aright, for thoſe whom God hath Elected, he hath abſolutely Decreed, that they ſhall be Juſtified, Sanctified, and *Saved*; but thoſe whom God hath Reprobated, he hath not abſolutely Decreed, that they ſhall be Damned, but hath left them to their own Choice, as *Adam* and *Eve* was; and therefore their Damnation is wilfull, of themſelves; but whether you are Elected or not, if I may ſo ſpeak, if you repent, and be converted, you ſhall be ſaved; if not, you ſhall be damned: As many as do periſh, do not periſh becauſe they were not Elected, but becauſe they would not uſe the Means in order to their Salvation.

O but, you will ſay, *it may be, God will not give me Grace to Repent, and without his Grace I can do nothing.*

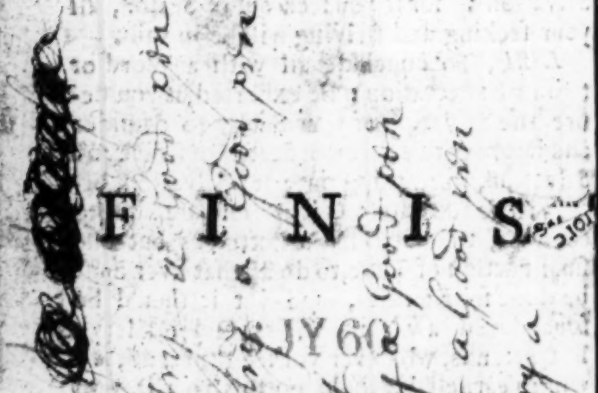
Anſw.

Anſw. Know for your Encouragement, that both you and every one elſe enjoys *a Day of Salvation*; and this Day of Salvation is a Time of Aſſiſtance, as well as a Time of Acceptance: Mark the Promiſe of Chriſt, *Mat. 7. 7. Ask, and ye ſhall have; ſeek, and ye ſhall find; knock, and it ſhall be opened unto you*: For every one that asketh, receiveth, and he that ſeeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh, it ſhall be opened.

Mark, Chriſt ſpeaks there nothing concerning Election, but every one, whoever he be, that asketh, ſeeketh, and knocketh for Grace, Pardon, and Mercy, and that in Seaſon, whilſt it may be had, ſhall certainly be heard and accepted: But then you muſt be ſure to ſeek in Seaſon, for ſeeking out of Seaſon, never yet found Succeſs. Now if *Eſau* had but ſought Repentance in earneſt, when God called him to repent, then GOD would have ſtrengthned and aſſiſted him, and alſo accepted him; but he ſought for Repentance when the Seaſon of Repentance was gone, and that ruined him for ever. Now mark this, whatever the Decrees of Heaven be concerning you, yet if you are but willing to leave your ſins, and do heartily deſire Grace and Mercy, and earneſtly ſeek it by Prayer and Supplication, and

that

that in the Season of Grace, whilst it is offered you; then, though you can do nothing of your selves, yet you shal have strength and assistance enough, for God will help you, Christ will help you, and the Spirit will help you; you shal have help from Heaven, and through the Spirit of Christs Strengthing, you shal be enabled to go through with this great Work, and then you shall not only be assisted, but also accepted and rewarded: But then you must be sure to seek out in Season, in your Day of Salvation; for if you seek out of Season, all your seeking and striving will be in vain.

Lastly, To conclude all with a Word or two of Exhortation: Be exhorted, as you desire the Salvation of your Souls, to consider and improve this precious Season of Grace and Salvation, in working out your Salvation, before it be too late: O it is most dreadful to consider, that GOD hath allotted us but one smal Portion of Time, to do all that ever must be done for Eternity, and yet it should be squandered away in Vanity and Foolery: But Friends, whatever you see others do, do you in earnest lay hold on this your Day of Salvation, before it is gone: *Seek ye the Lord now, whilst he may be found, and call upon him whilst he is near.* And whilst others spend their precious Time in Feasting, Rioting, and in the Pleasures of the Flesh, do you spend.

ſpend your Time in Faſting, Praying, Repenting, and Suing out the Pardon of your *Sins*, and making your Peace with GOD. And if you thus do, then at laſt, when Time ſhall ceaſe, and be no longer; you ſhall hear that bleſſed Welcome proceed from the Mouth of Chriſt, *Well done, thou good and faithfull Servant, enter into the Joy of thy Lord.* Which the Lord of his infinite Mercy grant to us all, *Amen.*